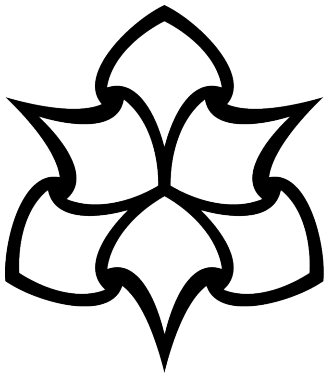

Trust and Distrust in Community Sports Work: Tales from the "Shop Floor"

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Abstract

This study addressed the issue of interpersonal trust and distrust in the (sporting) workplace. Data were generated through cyclical, in-depth interviews with 12 community sports coaches. The interview transcripts were subjected to etic and emic readings, with Hardin and Cook's theorization of (dis)trust and Goffman's dramaturgical writings providing the primary heuristic devices. Our analysis produced three interconnected themes. These were a) how the participants' decision to (dis)trust contextual others was based on their perceptions of encapsulated interests, b) those strategies that the participants employed to judge the trustworthiness of colleagues, and c) how the participants' workplace bonds with coworkers differed according to their perceived trustworthiness. Importantly, this study revealed how interpersonal (dis)trust for these individuals was informed by the pursuit of various professional interests, uncertainty regarding continued employment and career progression, and was subject to ongoing strategic interaction and reflection. Based on these findings, we believe there is much to gain from the micro-level exploration of "how" and "why" sports workers seek to negotiate and manage workplace relationships.

Key words: Sports work, (dis)trust, organizational life, impression management

Trust and Distrust in Community Sports Work: Tales from the "Shop Floor"

Trust is a core ingredient of social life (Barbalet, 2011; Karp, Yoels, Vann, & Borer, 2016; Ward, 2019). It has been described as the "faithfulness" or glue "upon which all social relationships ultimately depend" (Ronglan, 2011, p. 155), as it not only holds them together, but it is also the helps them to flourish (Möllering, 2001, 2006; Ward, 2019). Indeed, without a norm of trust underpinning our engagements with other people, organizations and institutions, our everyday lives, both private and public, would become extremely complicated and uncertain (Karp et al., 2016).

In recognition of the above, sociologists have increasingly considered the issue of trust and trustworthiness as they are connected to the social dynamics and functioning of organizations (Luhman, 2017; Sztompka, 1999). In particular, researchers in this topic area have typically identified two inter-related forms of trust (Ward, 2019). These are institutional trust and interpersonal trust. While the former is understood as the "the expected utility of institutions performing satisfactorily" (Mishler & Rose, 2001, p. 31), the latter is concerned with the decisions (e.g., to trust or not trust) that individuals (and groups) make about their future engagements and relationships with others (Ward, 2019). To date, interpersonal trust has been subject to extensive examination in mainstream sociology. Here, scholars have focused their attention on a variety of connected topics as they relate to the lives and work of social actors. These have included a) how interpersonal trust is experienced cognitively and emotionally by individuals, b) the ways in which trust between individuals and groups is developed, maintained, and spread, and c) how it may be weakened, dissolved, or broken (e.g., Brown & Calnan, 2015; Cui, Vertinsky, & Robinson 2015; Douglass & Calnan, 2016; Skinner, Dietz, & Weibel, 2013, among others). Within this growing corpus of research, trust is positioned as an inherently relational expression of confidence; one where an individual believes that another person will consider his or her interests when making a decision and,

importantly, will not seek to violate the moral standards of the relationship (e.g., Crossley, 2011; Giddens, 1991; Luhman, 2017; Simmel, 1978; Sztompka, 1999). Similarly, distrust is linked to an incongruence between the values and motivations of individuals and (or) the negative expectations that one individual has of another person within a particular social setting (Jones & George, 1998; Luhman, 2017; Sztompka, 1999). Importantly, scholars have increasingly attempted to locate these lines of inquiry in relation to the increasingly dominant neoliberal discourses regarding individualization, flexibilization, organizational loyalty, and the instrumental treatment of others in the workplace (and society in general) (Bauman, 2008; Ezzy, 2001; Ebert, 2016; Siebert, Martin, Bozic, & Docherty, 2015).

In contrast to the developments made in the wider sociological literature, the topic of interpersonal trust has received little explicit examination in the sociology of sport sub-discipline. While research has increasingly highlighted the political, relational, and emotional dimensions of social actors' everyday lives in sports organizations where employment is often characterized by short-term contracts (e.g., Nelson et al., 2013; Potrac, Jones, Gilbourne, & Nelson, 2013; Roderick, 2006, 2013), the issue of interpersonal trust has been frequently alluded to, but not directly addressed (Purdy, Potrac & Nelson, 2013). In subscribing to the view that the exploration of trust "matters" (Robbins, 2016, p. 972) to our understanding of organizational life in sport, this paper considered the place of interpersonal trust in the everyday working lives of a sample of community sports coaches. These sports workers play an important role in facilitating various health and social policy priorities (Cronin & Armour, 2013; Ives, Gale, Nelson & Potrac, 2016). In the UK, for example, community sports coaches are often responsible for the delivery of sport and physical activity initiatives designed to contribute to the health, wellbeing, and development of individuals and communities (Sport England, 2016). This includes combating obesity, reducing crime and developing pro-social behavior, overcoming social isolation and exclusion, promoting

healthy lifestyles, and raising educational aspirations and attainment (Cronin & Armour, 2013; Ives et al., 2016). Like all workers, community sports coaches have hopes, fears, and expectations that are bound up in a complex web of relationships influenced by social, economic, and institutional forces (cf. Ball, Maguire, & Braun, 2012). Indeed, community sports coaching, like other forms of work, has been progressively subject to neoliberal, market-oriented ideologies and practices (Ives et al., 2016). These not only include increasing intensification, individualization, and performativity, but also growing concerns regarding continued employment and career progression opportunities (Ezzy, 2001; Ives et al., 2016; Roderick, Smith, & Potrac, 2017). Surprisingly, however, there has been scant consideration of the everyday micro-level realties of "doing" this important form of work (Cronin & Armour, 2013; Ives, Gale, Nelson & Potrac, 2016).

In this study, in-depth, cyclic interviews were utilized to develop rich insights into participants' understandings of a) the importance of interpersonal trust in organizational settings where fears regarding job security and career progression were prevalent among employees, b) the strategies they used to uncover the motivations and intentions of colleagues and, ultimately, determine the trustworthiness of those individuals, and c) how their decision to trust (or distrust) colleagues influenced the nature and substance of the participants' ongoing workplace interactions and relationships with them (Sandstrom, Lively, Martin, & Fine, 2014). At the heart of this study is the desire to contribute new knowledge to the sociology of sport, which a) illuminates some of the connections between interpersonal trust and joint action in sport organizations and b) charts how trust is inextricably tied to personal meaning making regarding the intentions, expressions, and actions of the self and the other (Sandstrom et al., 2014). We believe that such inquiry has much to offer if we are to develop accounts of social relations in sport that not only recognize the role of "cynicism, ritual, and

trust," but which also generate rich insights into the organizational, cultural, and social reasons underpinning them (Manning, 2007, p. 72).

Methods

Sampling

Criterion-based and snowball sampling techniques were utilized to recruit participants for this study (Gray, 2018; Patton, 2002). Individuals were deemed eligible to participate in this study if they were a) aged 18 years or older, b) worked as part of a community sports coaching team for a minimum of 2 years, and c) were currently active as a community sports coach. For the purpose of this study, a community sports coach was defined as an individual who had a paid (part-time or full-time) or voluntary role in delivering initiatives where sport is used to achieve a variety of health, education, and social policy outcomes.

Following the receipt of institutional ethical approval, the first author began the process of participant recruitment. Initially, this entailed making contact with a number of regional community sports coaching leads, who were presented with a brief overview of the study (e.g., aims, methods, ethical arrangements, and the extent of participant involvement). Having secured their support, the first author was provided contact details of those individuals within their coaching teams that had shown an initial interest in this study. These community sports coaches were subsequently contacted and formally invited to participate in the study. These individuals also directed us towards other community sports coaches, who met the study's inclusion criteria and who might provide rich information cases (Shea-Schwartz & Yanow, 2012; Sparkes & Smith, 2014).

The final sample comprised 12 community sports coaches (11 male and 1 female) who were recruited across six local authorities and five private coaching providers in the North West of England. All of the participants were involved in the front-line delivery of various community sport initiatives. Nine held the role of a community sports coach and

three also had additional management responsibilities within their organizations. Eleven of the participants were full-time employees and one was employed on a part-time basis. The participants' experiences of community sports coaching work ranged from 2 to 10 years, and each held a United Kingdom Coaching Certificate (UKCC) Level Two coaching qualification. In the initial meetings with the participants, the purpose of the study, the nature of their participation, and the associated ethical implications were discussed in line with the host University's ethical guidelines. All participants provided written and verbal informed consent. Pseudonyms were used protect the anonymity of the participants and, indeed, those other individuals and organizations that the participants mentioned during the interview process (Kaiser, 2012; Purdy, 2014).

Data Generation

Given our focus on the participants' meaning making, and that the concepts of trust, trustworthiness, and distrust cannot be easily observed (Lyon, Möllering, & Saunders, 2012), in-depth interviews were chosen as the method for generating data. Our decision to utilize interviews is in keeping with previous published work, which has produced rich insights into the ways in which trust and distrust are understood and experienced in a range of organizational settings and contexts (e.g., Cook et al., 2004; Kelly & Harris, 2010). Based on the outcomes of initial pilot work, the interview guide utilized in this study focused on a) who the participants trusted or distrusted and why, b) how they sought to gain an understanding of an individual's trustworthiness (e.g., line-manager, other coaches), and c) how their trust or distrust of these people influenced their workplace interactions and relationships.

The main interviews for this study were conducted by the first author. The interviews took place at times and locations that suited the participants, especially in terms of them feeling comfortable and relaxed in their surroundings (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Throughout the interview process, "probing questions" were incorporated to help enrich the

dataset generated for this study (Seale, 2018, p. 180). For example, clarification probes were used to further explore any points that were unclear or open to misunderstanding (Patton, 2015). These included questions such as "I want to make sure I understand what you mean" or "Would you describe it for me again?" Similarly, elaboration probes were employed to elicit more in-depth responses about a particular point raised in an interview (Merriam, 2014). This involved using phrases such as "Why is that?" "Could you expand on that?" or "Could you tell me more about that?" Finally, detailed orientated probes were utilized to enhance the descriptions and insights shared by the participants (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). These included questions such as "When did that happen?" "Who was with you?" "How did you feel about that?" or "Where did you go then?" Each interview was audio taped and transcribed verbatim to ensure a complete and accurate record of the data (Merriam, 2014). The second cycle of interviews adopted a similar approach to questioning but was used to further explore, probe, and refine those experiences, insights, and interpretations shared in the first round of interviews (Nelson, Potrac, & Groom, 2014).

In total, 24 interviews were conducted. Each interview lasted between 90-120 minutes, with 3-4 hours of audible interview data being generated for each participant. A total of 42 hours of interview data were produced and transcribed verbatim. The participants were provided with a copy of their respective interview transcripts so that they could confirm its accuracy in terms of the words spoken, the information shared, and, importantly, the meanings that they attached to their respective accounts (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Smith & McGannon, 2017; Stake, 1995). Only one of the participants responded with additional contextual information. This related to a) clarifying their understanding of a specific set of workplace relationships and b) further elaborating on a strategy they implemented when determining a colleague's trustworthiness.

Iterative Analysis

The collection and analysis of data were iterative and recursive activities that occurred concurrently (Kelchtermans, 1993; Taylor, 2014; Tracy, 2013). Our analysis of data comprised two contrasting cycles of interpretation that were employed throughout the study (Tracy, 2013). The first entailed an *emic analysis* or emergent reading of the data. This process of analysis included three phases, namely, data immersion, primary cycle coding, and hierarchical coding and writing (Tracy, 2013). Here, we considered the richness of the data generated and sought to establish tentative ideas about, and descriptions of, the social processes evidenced within them (Kelchtermans, 2009). We then engaged in the process of analytical coding, which entailed grouping the developed codes into a hierarchical umbrella that sought to make conceptual connections between them (Richards, 2005). Such coding was grounded in the interpretation of, as well as reflection upon, meaning making related to the research questions driving this study (Merriam, 2009). This identification of meaningful data raised additional questions that were explored in the second round of interviewing.

The emic reading of the data was accompanied by a cycle of *etic analysis*. This comprised critical examination of those codes identified in the primary cycle of analysis, and organizing, synthesizing, and categorizing them into interpretive concepts. Within this secondary cycle of analysis, the principal aim was to interpret our initial analysis using relevant literature and theorizing (Tracy, 2013). Here, "analytical memos" were used to make preliminary links to theoretical concepts that might help to explain our data (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). Establishing such tentative theoretical links raised further questions that were explored in detail during the second round of interviewing. During this analytical process, each author in this study acted as a "critical friend," encouraging "reflection on and exploration of alternative explanations and interpretations" of the data (Sparkes & Smith, 2002, p. 266). Indeed, such discussions and the concurrent drafting (and redrafting) of this

manuscript were integral to the development and refinement of the interpretations that are ultimately presented in this manuscript (Groom, Nelson, Potrac, & Smith, 2014).

While data analysis comprised emic and etic phases, it is perhaps important to acknowledge that we began the process of research carrying the baggage of our respective paradigmatic and theoretical allegiances (Denzin, 2016). This inevitably shaped the aims and purposes of our research, those topics explored during data collection, and our making sense of the participants life worlds (Denzin, 2016; Srivasta & Hopwood, 2009). We accept, then, that our qualitative work, which is represented in the form of a (modified) realist tale (Purdy, Jones, & Cassidy, 2009), is not definitive. Rather, we provide one possible theoretical reading and representation of what we considered to be important and interesting features of the participants experiences as community sports coaches (Huggan, Nelson, & Potrac, 2015; Nelson et al., 2014).

Theoretical Framework

For this investigation, the respective theorizing of Hardin (2002, 2006), Cook et al. (2005), and Goffman (1959, 1969, 1974) were combined to form the overarching heuristic device. In the *Russell Sage Foundation Series on Trust*, Hardin (2002) and Cook et al. (2005) explored the role of (dis)trust and trustworthiness in establishing and maintaining cooperative behavior in an array of social, economic, and political contexts. Central to this analysis was the reformulation of trust as an *encapsulated interest* grounded in ongoing interpersonal interactions between a truster and trusted. From this viewpoint, trust relations are developed reciprocally (Hardin, 2006). Basically, "I trust you because your interest encapsulates mine, which is to say that you have an interest in fulfilling my trust" (Hardin, 2002, p. 3). According to Hardin (2002) and Cook et al. (2005) there are three common reasons for why the trusted would encapsulate the truster's interests as part of his or her own interests 1) we are in an ongoing relationship that I want to maintain because it's valuable to me, 2) I

consider you my friend, or I love you, or 3) I value my general reputation, which could be harmed if I am untrustworthy in my dealings with you. Trust, therefore, exists when person A believes that person B has an incentive (e.g., financial interests, emotional ties, reputation) to maintain the ongoing relationship with them. Distrust, on the other hand, is the negative of trust (Cook et al., 2005). Person A is likely to distrust person B if they think that person B's interests oppose their own and that person B will not take person A's interests into account in their actions (Hardin, 2006). In sum, Hardin (2002, 2006) and Cook et al. (2005) conceptualized (dis)trust as a relational, fluid, and dynamic commodity that is grounded in one party's assessment of another's morality, reciprocity, and self-interest over time.

While this perspective provides a useful analytical lens for understanding why an individual may (dis)trust other actors, it does not provide a rich interpretation of those interpersonal strategies that a person may employ to determine whether or not someone else is trustworthy, or the impact of this decision for future engagements with others. Therefore, we chose to supplement the theoretical ideas of Hardin (2002, 2006) and Cook et al. (2005) with Goffman's (1959, 1969, 1974) dramaturgical theory. This decision was grounded in the idea that Goffman's dramaturgical thinking enabled us to critically examine how sports workers might adopt a calculative approach to determining the trustworthiness of others and, by extension, protect and advance their own vested interests (Baert & Silva, 2010; Jacobson & Kristiansen, 2015; Shulman, 2017). In particular, the dramaturgical perspective allowed us to probe how varying levels of (dis)trust may "affect how well people work with teammates and whether people judge performances as credible or not" (Manning, 2007; Shulman, 2017, p. 64). Significantly, it provided a lens that enabled us to examine how interpersonal trust is formed and reformed in the presentation, evaluation, negotiation, and management of identity in the sporting workplace (Scott, 2015; Schulman, 2017).

For us, Goffman's work addressing *Strategic Interaction* (1969) has particular utility for analyzing how a social actor may judge the trustworthiness of others. In this classic text, Goffman (1969) adopted a game analogy to address the "calculative, gamelike aspects of mutual dealings" (p. x). At the heart of this analysis was the idea that people play *expression games* during face-to-face interaction. Expression games refers to "the ways in which the information ordinarily conveyed through speech or, often unconsciously, through expressive behavior may be manipulated, distorted or concealed, and of the ways in which it may nevertheless be uncovered or extracted and interpreted – or misinterpreted" (Burns, 1992, p. 59). In other words, it is a game of trying to gather information about other people's intentions and motives while concealing information yourself. This requires the use of what Goffman (1969) termed *interactional moves*. These include the *naïve move*, whereby the subject is unaware that they are being observed and the *unwitting move*, whereby the subject cares not for what impression they are giving off (Goffman, 1969). People can also make use of the *control move* to hide information from others, the *uncovering move* to find out information about others, and the *counter-uncovering* move to prevent the attempts others make to learn their information (Shulman, 2017). The objective of expression games, therefore, is to employ appropriate moves to "understand [another] person's perspective, how they feel, think, and experience the world, so that you can exploit them or foil their efforts to exploit you" (Shulman, 2017, p. 230).

In *Frame Analysis*, Goffman (1974) further expanded on the way people may seek to acquire, reveal, and conceal information during everyday interactions. For us, this theorizing offers additional sense making tools for investigating interpersonal (dis)trust. Specifically, Goffman outlined the use of *fabrications* in everyday interaction, which refers to "the intentional effort of one or more individuals to manage activity so that a party of one of more will be induced to have false belief about what is going on" (Goffman, 1974, p.

83). Goffman (1974) identified two types of fabrication based on whose interests are served (i.e., the fabricators or the dupes). *Benign fabrications* are deceptions engineered for the benefit of those contained by them, or at least not carried out against the dupes interest (e.g., hosting a surprise party or playful deceit). *Exploitative fabrications* are when one party contains others in a deception that is patently inimical to their private interests (e.g., a con job or planting evidence). Goffman (1974) also discussed how individuals may use *secret monitoring* to strategically gather information about others. This is where a person attempts to "bug" or gain access to social settings in which another actor's "strategic or dark secrets are unguarded or their discrediting conduct is observable" (Goffman, 1974, p. 170). The basic premise of secret monitoring is that the actor under surveillance is secretly engaging in some malpractice, which covert monitoring will uncover, and render their performance discreditable (Burns, 1992).

Finally, we made use of Goffman's works addressing *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* to explore how personal levels of trust and distrust between social actors may influence workplace interactions, engagements, and relationships. In this treatise of social life, Goffman (1959) examined how people present information about themselves to influence the impressions audiences will have of them. A key consideration was how people perform in different social spaces referred to as regions of performance, namely the *frontstage* and *backstage*. Central to these discussions were who is permitted access to each of these regions, the type of performance enacted in them, and the impact of such performance for future social relations. The frontstage region is where actors deliver public performances and where audiences scrutinize them. Here, the performer expressively accentuates some aspects of their activity in an effort to maintain and embody prevailing normative expectations, while at the same time, suppresses those aspects that may discredit the fostered impression (Goffman, 1959). The backstage region is where actors relax out of

character and (or) rehearse, dissect, and reflect upon one's frontstage performance (Scott, 2015). It is a private area, away from the glare of social judgements, where one or more persons may contradict their public identities and engage in activities such as reciprocal first naming, cooperative decision making, profanity, and minor physical self-involvements (Goffman, 1959). In summary, then, we believe the amalgamation of the sense-making frameworks outlined above has much to offer to the critical examination of interpersonal (dis)trust in the sporting workplace.

Findings and Analysis

Our analysis of the interview data led to the production of three interrelated categories. The first was concerned with importance of interpersonal trust in the community sports coaching workplace, as well as those relational factors that our participants deemed necessary if they were to trust contextual stakeholders. The second category focused on the interactional strategies that our participants implemented in an effort to establish the trustworthiness of other individuals (and groups) within their respective organizational settings. The final category addressed how this (dis)trust manifested itself in the participants' engagements with coworkers. Each of these topics are explored below.

Want my Trust? Encapsulate my Interests

The participants described the workplace as an arena that was characterized by competition and uncertainty as much as it was by collaboration and shared goals (Jones & Wallace, 2005). Specifically, they explained how their experiences of work were not immune from the effects of neoliberal policy, which among other things, have led to increases in short-term, insecure employment contracts and the increased measurement of workplace performance (Kalleberg 2018; Roderick et al., 2017; Verhaeghe, 2014). Similar to embryonic research findings in this area (e.g., Gale, Potrac, Nelson, & Ives, 2017; Ives et al., 2016), the participants recognised that they were performing *precarious work*. By this, we mean "work that is

uncertain, unstable, and insecure and in which employees bear the risks of work (as opposed to business or the government) and receive limited social benefits and statutory protections" (Kalleberg & Vallas, 2018, p. 1). As Louie explained:

> The austerity agenda has hit massively… I have worked on fixed, 12-month contracts for [the past] 8 years. As a result, I am nearly 40 years old and I still can't get a mortgage. Sometimes it just feels like my life is on hold. But, that is just community sports coaching now. There are hardly any full-time, permanent contracts these days. Posts are short-term and based on your ability to deliver against the funding… It is a really tough working environment. You are always worrying, always looking for pots of money; always thinking about who has the money and how you can fit your work to get the money. **(Louie)**

Given this interpretation of the workplace, it is perhaps unsurprising that the participants stressed the importance of interpersonal trust between coworkers. They described how "knowing who to trust and who to not" was crucial to them in terms fulfilling personal workplace ambitions, maintaining a positive reputation in the eyes of others, and, ultimately, for the ongoing security of their employment. For example, Ross and Jude respectively noted:

> You need to identify the people that you can turn to. You look for those that support you, the team, and the programs. I have noticed, as our team has got smaller, these things have become easier to recognize in colleagues. You work out who is supportive, who wants to work together to reach our targets and goals, and who doesn't or is in it for themselves. The team's image and reputation is important, and I often have to work in different ways with different people to protect and advance it. **(Ross)**

> At face value the relations in the office were harmonious and supportive, however, there was an undercurrent of competitiveness, which led to some staff members

> always wanting to get "one up" on others in the office. This could have been to prove their worth given the short-term nature of their contracts, which were often funded by external bodies such as Sport England. Knowing who you can trust impacts your own ability to perform in your role; you need to know who's on your side and who isn't. I am quite a trusting person and have no issue sharing ideas and thoughts, but I struggle with the fact that some people will use my trust and openness to benefit themselves to my detriment. Identifying who you can trust can help you develop relationships within the workplace, and it can determine how productive you are within a team. **(Jude)**

The participants' beliefs regarding the nature of workplace relationships arguably reflects Goffman's (1974) discussion of the *insider's folly*. Rather than adopting a "rose tinted" view of the workplace where they believed everybody else was on their side, the participants had, through their interactions with others, generated an alternative meaning. Specifically, they recognized how "competition may be no less fierce between those who share a superficial loyalty" and that their personal success or failure at work could be influenced by disclosing too much information or imputing the wrong motives to another (Scott, 2015, p. 216).

Based on this reading of workplace relationships, the participants described how they had learned to take a cautious approach to trusting others within the workplace. In making the decision to trust others, the participants explained how they trusted colleagues and superiors who a) valued their ideas and supported their professional development and/or b) proved to be competent and reliable in terms of assisting the participants to achieve their respective workplace goals (Hardin, 2002, 2006). Consistent with Hardin's writings on this topic, the participants bestowed trust to those colleagues whose decisions, actions, and behaviors not only demonstrated a desire to maintain positive relations, but, importantly, encapsulated enough of the participant's interests in his or her own interests. That is, the

participant coaches trusted coworkers when their "own interests [were] encapsulated in the interests of the trusted" (Hardin, 2006, p. 19). As Billy and Benji explained:

> From day one, my line-manager has shown an interest in what I wanted, which was to identify ways to make extra income for the department. Through this, we decided on creating a "Football & Golf" camp for young children, which she really did support and back me with, as it's an interest to both of us. I get the impression she really wants to support me as she really put my idea forward to the management team. I saw her backing this idea, it was the first action that probably led me to trust her, as I felt my opinion/ ideas were valued. She showed how passionate she was about the interest we both had which showed to me that I could trust her. **(Billy)**

> If I need cover, I would want this individual to be there in my replacement. I rely on schools to buy into what we do and that means that everything we do has to be high quality. If they have a negative experience, very quickly, it could be shared locally with other schools and negatively impact on us as a service. I can pretty much guarantee he will support me in what I do with the School Sports Partnership. It benefits me because I know things will still be achieved in my absence, and it benefits him as he gets to network and engage at the event. **(Benji)**

In addition to identifying people who they trusted and why they trusted them, the participants also identified colleagues whom they did not trust. The lack of trust afforded to these coworkers was grounded in the participants' perceptions of these others as being unreliable, obstructive, selfish, or dishonest (Cook et al., 2005). In other words, the community sports coaches under study tended to distrust stakeholders whose encapsulated interests and actions were detrimental for, opposed to, or at least failed to align with, their own objectives,

aspirations, and preferences (Cook et al., 2005; Hardin, 2002, 2006). For example, Ryan noted:

> I had only been at this school a couple of months, the previous teacher left and a new one took over. I tried to spend some time with the new teacher, whose class I would be going into. I wanted to discuss what I was there for, my visions, and how the children were already progressing. Despite trying with her, she just wasn't engaged when I communicated with her, she would be flying around in the classroom doing [other] things. I could tell she wasn't interested in what I was saying, and that I was an inconvenience. She never asks how the children are doing. This [negatively] affects me. If she is asked how I am doing in the school, I wouldn't trust her to make the proper judgement, as she doesn't care. Her interests are focused on her own work, not mine. **(Ryan)**

The participants were especially distrusting of those colleagues and other stakeholders who appeared to focus on furthering their own interests and welfare at the expense of others. In-keeping with Hardin's analysis (2002, p. 94), the participants explained how they did not trust, and were extremely suspicious of, those coworkers who they believed to have "strategically misrepresented themselves in order to gain an advantage" during previous interactional encounters. By way of example, Jude described how a colleague's failure to acknowledge Jude's scheme as a source of inspiration for his own violated the moral standards of the relationship (Crossley, 2011; Luhman, 2017; Sztompka, 1999) and, as a result, led to Jude distrusting this individual. In his own words:

> We worked in the north of the district and the other two worked in the south. We tried something new with a group and it was going well and retaining the community participants. In a team meeting, we reported its success. Then about a month later, I

> found out that it was rolled out in the south, but there was all this documentation, paperwork, and a booklet. It was very good, but at the same time, I was thinking that's what we were doing, and you've clearly just taken it… I realized they were more than happy to take ideas, not acknowledge us, and keep it to themselves. This impacted the level of trust I placed with this individual in a negative way. I felt let down and, in some ways, demotivated by this instance. The longer-term effect of this was that I held back on sharing future information and I became cautious in what I shared. **(Jude)**

Playing Interactional "Games" to Judge the Trustworthiness of Coworkers

The participants illuminated how they utilized various interactional strategies to acquire information about the motivations and intentions of their coworkers; knowledge that they ultimately used to assess and determine the trustworthiness of their coworkers. The first strategy employed by the participants entailed observing and critically evaluating the role performances of colleagues (Goffman, 1969). In particular, they described how they would scrutinize the embodied gestures, movements, and expressions of fellow employees during interpersonal encounters to make inferences about their credibility, sincerity, and (dis)honesty. As Louie and Billy noted:

> I like listening to how people structure what they say. Is it all about them? Is it more about the topic at hand? I also observe the communications I have with people and if they speak to others about it, positively or negatively. I observe behavior probably on a sub-conscious level, often people won't even realize you're critiquing their comments. Are they telling the truth when speaking to others? Are their words kind? Are they respectful even in disagreement? I think the link is quite straightforward – someone who I observe as dishonest, disrespectful, and unkind is unlikely to gain my trust. **(Louie)**

> This new person was equivalent level to me, therefore, I knew he would be required to work on the same schemes as me at some point. Part of my role is to sort cover for sessions. I wanted to find out what this person was like, a team player or more concerned with his own personal gain. During conversation, I decided to ask him if he would cover and help us out last minute. By asking him face-to-face, I was able to gauge his initial response, and decide if he is a person I could come to rely on or not. **(Billy)**

Such extracts reveal how the participants were motivated to play *expression games* (Goffman, 1969) before making judgements about whether to (dis)trust coworkers. Specifically, the participants, or players, as Goffman (1969) would call them, appeared to make regular use of *uncovering moves* to determine colleagues' intentions, resources, and stockpile of information (Goffman, 1969; Jacobson & Kristiansen, 2015). This often entailed the use of some form of examination, such as studying "the tracks the subject leaves, his [*sic*] spoor, as it were," to reveal the motives of these individuals (Goffman, 1969, p. 19). By making such interactional moves the participants were ultimately seeking to gain access to the "real," backstage self, of another coworker in an attempt to decide if they were trustworthy (or not) (Scott, 2015).

As demonstrated in Billy and Louie's interview extracts (presented above), the participants often sought to conceal their attempts to monitor the behaviors of coworkers in acknowledgement that "the arousal of suspicion in another so that he [*sic*] suspects he [*sic*] is being suspected can be a strategic loss" (Goffman, 1969, p. 52). This was especially so when they felt that the coworker in question might "secretly" be an untrustworthy performing character. For example, Craig and Mark described how they implemented the following investigative strategies:

> One strand of strategy I use is to make a judgement on their delivery. Taking that time to drop down to sessions to see it from afar, without advanced warning, go down and have a look at them in that scenario, see how the participants relate to them. There are some sessions where parents go to watch and I have stood with parents and just listened to their feedback. It helps me understand if the coach is being trustworthy really, are they consistently meeting the standards and expectations we set as a business. This strategy works both ways, if I have my doubts about the trustworthiness of someone then it helps to confirm if my judgement is correct. This approach gives me a true picture of what is happening on the ground. **(Craig)**

> Some of the school reports that we were led to believe were outstanding didn't come back as such. He was trying to pull the wool over our eyes. He would give us the updates from the school [and] we had no reason to question it, as we thought we could trust him. He did a good job at sustaining the impression he was the best thing since sliced bread. When we started to have problems with him in and around the office, with equipment going missing and staff coming to us saying he was the one gossiping and speaking about others, "we had a little dig around" [behind his back] and it turns out the schools were not happy with him. Ironically, the people that he mentioned in his conversations were the people that didn't back up what he was telling us; the sports coordinators and the head teacher. His actions negatively influenced the prospects of maintaining the big contract we held with the school, which was in our interest to keep as it generated money for the business. These actions collectively led to a complete breakdown of trust and the colleague no longer works for us. **(Mark)**

The examples presented above eloquently highlight the participants' use of *secret monitoring* as a strategy to make informed judgements about the trustworthiness of their colleagues (Goffman, 1974). They explained how they would spy on or, in Goffman's terminology,

secretly monitor the performances of these individuals to reveal instances of exploitative fabrication (Goffman, 1974). The premise behind these actions were that covert monitoring would uncover suspected deception by permitting the participants access to those "places, times, and audiences when he [or she] quite properly conducts himself [or herself] in a manner that would discredit this first performance" (Goffman, 1974, p. 168-169).

For some participants, attempts to establish the trustworthiness of colleagues went beyond the strategic interactional practices of uncovering moves and secret monitoring. These individuals explained how they also purposely laid "traps" to test the loyalty and character of coworkers (Goffman, 1974). This often involved sharing confidential and sensitive information with peers and superiors "and then waiting to see if indeed it comes to pass that the information has been divulged" (Goffman, 1974, p. 97). As Jamie and Louie shared with us:

> Feed them something small to begin with, and see how it goes. If they can be trusted with the information, you may start giving them more. Or, if they can't, you give them nothing ever again. I did this with a work colleague, slightly senior to me… I used it to gauge his trustworthiness, if the information leaked out I would know where it came from… When you give someone sensitive information it's always a huge worry that it may get out as common knowledge. **(Jamie)**

> I purposively gave a colleague some "confidential" council information concerning the council's intention to buy a piece of land. After disclosing, I went to speak to this person's coworker to see if this information was fed back to me. I soon learnt that my colleague was unwilling to be respective of my wishes for it to remain a conversation between the two of us. **(Louie)**

The participants behaviors in such social situations arguably reflects Goffman's (1974) concept of *exploitative fabrication* because it involved deception and ulterior motives. The participants knew that they were deliberately disclosing this information to achieve a hidden agenda, namely, to uncover the trustworthiness of a coworker (Manning, 2007; Smith, 2006). However, this version of reality was unbeknown to said coworker; they were simply unaware that the participants primary motive for divulging this information was to gauge if the coworker was trustworthy (or not) (Persson, 2019).

Workplaces as Stages: The Impact of Interpersonal (Dis)Trust for Working Relations

Based on their "pre-screening" and past experiences of similar interactions, the participants made a decision whether (or not) to trust coworkers in the future (Shulman, 2017; Ward, 2019). As hinted across the previous two categories, the participants explained how the outcome of these interpersonal interactions inevitable influenced future engagements and relationships (Barbalet, 2011; Cook et al., 2005; Hardin, 2002; Sandstorm et al., 2014). The participants described their relations with those few coworkers that they trusted as being more cooperative, relaxed, and personable in nature (Hardin, 2002). They highlighted how they were able to talk openly (and honestly) about working processes, issues, and other colleagues with these individuals, as well as share aspects of their private lives that they did not disclose to the majority of organizational stakeholders with whom they were required to work. In Goffman's (1959) terms, then, the participants arguably permitted these trusted individuals to access to the backstage region. Indeed, they were willing to relax the persona and share personal information and entrusted secrets; secrets that if not kept by the trusted could have "spoiled" the participants' frontstage performances in the eyes of other coworkers:

> I definitely notice a difference in the way that I speak to this person and the way I speak to "bad cop." Our conversations can range from work to personal things very

> easily and I don't have this with other colleagues. I have an honest conversation with him and get an honest answer. It's probably due to the amount of time we spend with each other. There's things that he has also said to me in confidence that he would not expect me to go and say to other people. We know through our regular interactions we have common ground and are working towards the same goal, successful schemes. (**Ryan)**

> Jim and I clicked in a way that I did not do with many of my other colleagues… I would, and did, go out for a pint with Jim after work whilst I would not even consider doing that with others… We both held each other in high regard and there was an almost unwritten agreement between us that any conversations that we had would stay between us. We both knew that, if one of us said something controversial for example, that the other would not throw them "under the bus" by disclosing something in order to have some personal gain… I think that it helped to build a stronger and more trusting relationship. I think that everyone has two faces, the one that we present to colleagues and the people we meet, and our true selves. The former tends to be a façade, we behave and act how society expects us to and we paint ourselves as strong individuals with no weaknesses. The latter is our real personalities and it requires an element of trust to allow someone to see that side of you. One of the things that helped to develop our relationship was the fact that we both shared elements of ourselves that we would keep hidden from others. **(Ollie)**

In comparison to those whom they trusted, the participants outlined how a "degree of wariness" characterized interpersonal interactions with colleagues that they did not trust (Hardin, 2002, p. 90). They explained how this "air of caution" or "protective guard" resulted in them trying to reduce the relative frequency of their (direct) interactions with these

distrusted individuals (Hardin, 2002), as well as refraining from discussing sensitive and potentially problematic matters relating to both work and non-work life:

> I don't necessarily discuss many matters with him and I restrict disclosing my thoughts with him, as I'm not sure where it would go. If I had a new idea for developing our service, past experience shows me he's happy to make open, negative comments to others. I also choose not to do certain things around him until he's out of the office such as make phone calls to schools, so he cannot sit there and judge what I might be saying. We discuss things when we need to and it's usually only around some of the joint role / delivery aspects, where we should communicate, but that's it. **(Shaun)**

> I didn't openly admit to him that I distrust him. It's just better to restrict the information I give and just be amicable. After I had recognized that I needed to be careful what I disclosed, that for me was enough. We have quite a large funding bid from the FA. He always asks me how many people are attending, what groups we are working with, what schools we are working with, and what discussions we are having. But, I keep my feedback quite limited. I never tell him who we are specifically working with. There is always a side of me that thinks, "if I tell him too much, he could use of all this to his advantage in an attempt to access the same money in the future." **(Ollie)**

Consistent with Hardin's (2002) analysis, it could be argued that, while distrust served to protect the participants "against losses that would follow from taking the risk of cooperating with [certain] others," it can also be problematic in terms of blocking "even the attempt at cooperation" (p. 94). In contrast to the previous discussion of trusting relationships, the participants purposefully limited their interactions with those they distrusted to frontstage

performances only (Goffman, 1959). They feared that their sharing of backstage secrets and their relaxation out of character, might be used by these individuals to compromise the image that the participants wished to give off to others in the front region (Goffman,1959). Consequently, the participants exercised *dramaturgical discipline* in their dealings with these individuals, which meant "being in control of all facets of performance possible during the show. That discipline extends, for example, to expressing no unmeant gestures, being poised, composed, and ready" (Shulman, 2017, p. 85). For the participants, this also entailed the feigning of breezy nonchalance, while remaining cautious and vigilant in their interactions with distrusted others (Goffman, 1959; Scott, 2015; Shulman, 2017), as well as concealing their true feelings "and personal opinions beneath a façade of team solidarity" (Scott, 2015, p. 216).

Conclusion

In seeking to contribute to the evolving literature base examining the everyday, micro-dynamics of sports work (e.g., Nelson et al., 2013; Potrac et al., 2013; Roderick, 2006; Thompson, Potrac, & Jones, 2015), this paper sought to explore the participants' sense making regarding their choice to trust or distrust their colleagues. Rather than unproblematically trusting the various individuals with whom they worked, the participants, instead, largely adopted a circumspect and instrumental stance to their relationships with others. This approach arguably reflected their readings of the organizational situation in which they found themselves and, relatedly, the motives of their situational counterparts (Cook et al., 2005; Goffman, 1967; Hardin, 2002). Specifically, the participants were acutely aware of the competitive and uncertain nature of their employment and that, in these conditions, others could not be relied upon to always act in benign or supportive ways (Goffman, 1959, 1967; Hardin, 2002, 2006). This sense making underpinned their choices to engage in various expression games, namely, uncovering moves, secret monitoring, and

exploitative fabrications to assess the intentions, motives, and actions of others (Goffman, 1969). The information gleaned through these interactional strategies was ultimately used to determine if particular individuals could be relied upon (or not) to protect, advance, or maximize the participants own position or gains within an organization (Cook et al., 2005; Goffman, 1967; Hardin, 2002). While the participants trusted those who acted in supportive ways, they distrusted those whose interests, motives, and actions were believed to be in conflict with, or at the expense of, their own (Cook et al., 2005; Goffman, 1967; Hardin, 2002). Overall, the decision to trust or distrust a colleague not only influenced the willingness and frequency of the participants engagements with these others, but also the substance of these interactions (Goffman, 1967).

Our central motivation for doing this research was to make a significant contribution to the sociological study of sports work (Roderick et al., 2017). By focusing our analyses on trust, distrust, and trustworthiness, we believe this paper provides important insights into the complex, strategic, and inherently relational experiences of community sports coaches, who work in insecure occupational environments. It is also hoped that this investigation can provide a stimulus for further examinations of interpersonal trust in the sporting workplace more generally. For example, while this study has provided novel insights into at least some of the interactional strategies that sports workers may utilize to judge if colleagues are trustworthy, we do not claim that the approaches outlined in this paper are the only ones used (Gale, Ives, Potrac, & Nelson, 2017). As such, we urge scholars to continue to not only explore those strategies that sports workers use to determine the trustworthiness of various contextual stakeholders, but also “when,” “how,” and “why” they use them. We also know very little about how and why (dis)trust between sports workers changes over time or, indeed, how sports workers seek to utilize the trust of others to achieve desired ends (Purdy et al., 2013). Equally, a further worthwhile line of inquiry would be to examine how sports workers

seek to cultivate, maintain, and, where necessary, repair their trustworthiness in the eyes of others (cf. Lewicki, Tomlinson, & Gillespie, 2006; Williams, 2007). Finally, and in responding to recent calls for more nuanced understandings of the emotional dimensions of sports work (e.g., Ives, Gale, Potrac, & Nelson, in press; Potrac, Smith, & Nelson, 2017; Roderick et al., 2017), we invite researchers to consider the specific emotions that feature in the development and maintenance of (dis)trust between individuals (cf. Lee & Selart, 2011; Niven, Holman, & Totterdell, 2012; Williams, 2007). The consideration of the interconnections between embodied experience, the management of specific emotions, and interpersonal trust has potentially much to offer in terms of better understanding important societal issues regarding job satisfaction and productivity, work related stress, and the wellbeing of workers (cf. Matzeler & Renzl, 2006; Guinot, Chiva, & Roca-Puig, 2014; Roderick et al., 2017). From our perspective, exploring these topic areas is important if we are to more adequately understand the connections between, as well as consequences of, increasingly market-oriented neoliberal policy making, changing (more insecure) employment conditions, and the relationally lived experiences of sports workers (Kalleberg, 2018; Roderick et al., 2017).

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